

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Approved in S
7/9/62

SecDel/MC/57

Memorandum of Conversation

DECLASSIFIED

DATE: March 13, 1962
12 NoonDowngraded To: SECRET ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

EO 11652 XCCC

The Secretary's Suite
Hotel Richmond
Geneva, Switzerland

Authorized by the President

August 4, 1965

SUBJECT: Germany and Berlin

PARTICIPANTS: United States
The Secretary
Mr. AkalovskyUSSR
Mr. Gromyko
Mr. SoukhodrevCOPIES TO: S/S - Navy - 2
S/P - Mr. Rostov - 3
G - Mr. Johnson - 4
S/B - Mr. Bohlen - 5
EUR - Mr. Kohler - 6
INR/D - Mr. Hilsman - 7BTF - Mr. Hillenbrand - 7
OSD - Mr. McNamara - 4
Ambassy Moscow - Amb. Thompson - 10
White House - Mr. Bundy - 11
C. L. 13
F. L. 13
#1-7224 File

The Secretary and Mr. Gromyko met for one hour prior to the luncheon hosted by the Secretary.

The Secretary opened the conversation by expressing his appreciation of Mr. Gromyko's coming before lunch to talk very privately on one or two points.

The Secretary stated that he thought it might be useful to explore whether communications could be established across the gulf which appeared to separate the two sides. He observed that it was not clear what each side had precisely in mind when it made statements. Recalling the President's meeting with Mr. Khrushchev in Vienna and the subsequent exchanges of views, the Secretary stated the US had supposed that when Mr. Khrushchev raised the question of Berlin and Germany his problem was to stabilize the situation from the standpoint of Soviet interest, particularly with regard to those parts of Germany which were under Soviet control and responsibility. The United States has refrained from protesting or interfering unduly because it had recognized that the situation perhaps warranted attention from the Soviet viewpoint. However, the Secretary noted, the present situation no longer warranted this kind of assessment of what Mr. Khrushchev had meant. What was now being done and said indicated an intention to do what the President had said in Vienna the US could not accept, i.e., diminish the Western position in Berlin and Germany while strengthening the Soviet and Bloc position in that situation. The Secretary observed that if there were no intention to move against the vital interests of the West in Germany and Berlin, other things might fall in place

CATEGORY "A"

Secretive Designation

Removed AUG 17 872

11 - DW.

FILE RS/R

(S/S)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

RECEIVED

() RELEASE () DECLASSIFY
() EXISTE () DECLASSIFY IN PART
() DENY () DELETE
() Non-responsive info.

TO: []
FROM: []
SUBJECT: []
DATE: []
BY: []
RE: []

and

104.00/3-1362

JUN 26 1962

~~SECRET-EYES ONLY~~

DECLASSIFIED

and could be adjusted. He stressed, however, that if there were an intention to drive the West out of Berlin, then there was a serious problem at hand both in Washington and Moscow.

Referring to the question of the so-called respect for the sovereignty of the GDR, the Secretary stated that this raised no problem if it meant that access should not interfere with the internal affairs of East Germany. On the other hand, there was a grave problem if this meant that East Germany could interfere with access. The Secretary stressed the view that both Mr. Gromyko and himself should be able to clarify the language they used with each other. If there was no problem, both sides could see what political action could be taken; conversely, if there was a problem, then one would have to proceed on that basis.

The Secretary went on to say that the same point could be illustrated in other ways. For example, Moscow had talked a great deal about a peace treaty. The Secretary said that a peace treaty between Moscow and Pankow was of no particular concern to the US if it was clear that such a treaty would not attempt to do what it could not do, namely, dispose of Western rights and access. He recalled in this connection that this had been recognized in the formula of the 1955 Zorin-Bolz understanding. A treaty with such a formula would not create crisis or tensions. Turning to the question of recognition of the GDR, the Secretary recalled Mr. Gromyko's statement to Ambassador Thompson that the West already recognized the GDR. He said that it was true that the US acted on the basis that there was a place called GDR and that there were authorities which were in control there. From that standpoint, there should be no problem. However, both sides should explore what lay behind their statements, so that they could see what each side had in mind and that they could communicate efficiently and see how to deal with the situation, rather than stay apart through lack of understanding.

Mr. Gromyko said he had listened attentively to the Secretary's remarks and that his impression was that the Secretary had essentially repeated what he had said before. Mr. Gromyko claimed that he had tried to detect new points in the Secretary's remarks but had failed to see such points. With reference to the meaning of the phrase "respect for the sovereignty of the GDR", Mr. Gromyko stated that both sides should agree that, in matters relating to communications and access to West Berlin, specific questions should be decided in accordance with the accepted international practice, i.e., all questions pertaining to transit by land, air, and water should be resolved in accordance with that practice. While that practice was a long established

one

~~SECRET~~
~~SECRET-EYES ONLY~~

DECLASSIFIED

SECRET-EYES ONLY

DECLASSIFIED

one and had concrete content, it might find different expression in different documents. In brief, it meant that states across whose territory transit took place must be respected and be allowed to live and develop as sovereign and independent states. Mr. Gromyko reiterated his view expressed previously that it was possible to reconcile such respect with the requirement of free access. Thus, if the United States Government and the other Western Powers were prepared to agree that in reaching an understanding on unrestricted access, an understanding must also be reached with regard to respect for the sovereignty of the GDR in accordance with International Law, then the way to agreement was open. Conversely, if the US sought agreement on free access which would ignore the sovereign rights of the GDR, then the way to agreement was closed. Mr. Gromyko said he did not know whether his remarks would dispell the Secretary's doubts, but said the Soviet Union did believe it possible to reconcile these two requirements. He said that when both sides got down to elaborating specific agreements, this would be formulated in specific language. In this connection, he noted that Ambassador Thompson had received the Soviet draft of a possible formula.

Referring to the Secretary's remarks regarding diminution of Western rights, Mr. Gromyko contended that they were unfounded and that it was wrong to pose the question in this manner. He claimed that assertions that the Soviet Union intended to drive the West out of West Berlin, to detract from the vital interests of the West, or even to take hold of West Berlin either for itself or East Germany were completely unfounded. The USSR was convinced that a German peace treaty and the settlement of the West Berlin question on the basis of such a treaty would not entail any loss for any of the Western powers. The USSR did not believe that a peace treaty and the creation of a free city of West Berlin would lead to the weakening of the Western position, or of the US position in particular. On the contrary, the USSR believed that such a settlement would strengthen the positions of all concerned since it would remove forever the source of tension and the fever now shaking all of Western Europe. He reiterated that it was incorrect to put the question in a way that implied that somebody was to take something and somebody was to give. He expressed the view that a settlement of this problem would lead to a settlement of relations between the US and USSR.

Mr. Gromyko then referred to the principle of respect for the existing way of life in West Berlin, which had been mentioned by the Secretary the day before. He claimed that this principle was part of the Soviet position, which was based on the premise that West Berlin should enjoy the social order desired by its population and that there should be no interference from

the outside.

SECRET

~~SECRET-EYES ONLY~~

DECLASSIFIED

the outside. He professed bewilderment as to why the US had such "Mont Blancs" of doubts with regard to Soviet intentions and said he assumed the US had mountains of files with papers ascribing to the USSR the intention to dupe the other side and all sorts of other cunning motives. He recalled Mr. Khrushchev's efforts in Vienna to persuade the President that a settlement of this problem was in the interest of both sides.

The Secretary stated there was a big difference between the two types of approach. One thing was to propose a solution and say that it was good for the other side; it was another thing to recognize that each side had vital interests and to see how the problem could be resolved in what both sides believed to be in accord with their interests. He stressed that the US could not accept the Soviet proposition that the Soviet proposal was in the US interest. He expressed the view that both sides could accept that each of them had vital interests in Central Europe and that they should see how those interests could be adjusted.

Reverting to the question of the so-called respect for the sovereignty of the GDR, the Secretary noted the fact that the West had had over many years agreement with the USSR with regard to access rights. He stated that it was not incompatible with the sovereignty or rights of any authority to accept such an agreement. The understanding between Moscow and Pankow fully protected this point. As to access by air, the Secretary noted that it was proper practice today to have transit across territories take place without the slightest interference from those on the ground. Therefore, there should be no incompatibility in this matter, unless there was an intention to impose restrictions and control over such rights.

The Secretary said that we had no difficulty with the known fact that East Germans administered certain parts of access and coordinated traffic on water, rail, and the Autobahn. He noted that there was already a considerable amount of direct East German participation in this matter. Therefore, there should be no practical problem.

Finally, the Secretary stated that he could accept Mr. Gromyko's statement that there was no ground to suppose that the USSR was trying to diminish the position of the Western Powers. He expressed readiness to sit down to discuss the problem on that basis. He recalled that he had mentioned several points the day before, although there might be some others, which needed to be discussed along these lines.

Mr. Gromyko said he wished the Secretary to understand correctly his

statement

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET - EYES ONLY~~

DECLASSIFIED

statement that adoption of the Soviet proposals for a peace treaty, even if such a treaty were to be signed only by the Soviet Union with the GDR, for the creation of a free city of West Berlin, and for free access to that city under conditions of respect for the sovereignty of the GDR would be in the interest of all concerned. The Soviet Union believed that such a settlement would not undermine or diminish the position of any state because it would ease tensions rather than worsen the prospects for peace and security. Furthermore, the Soviet Union strongly believed that such a settlement would even strengthen the positions of all concerned since it was in the interest of peace.

Finally, Mr. Gromyko stated that he had noted that the Secretary, in referring to the sovereignty of the GDR, had used formulations which raised quite a few questions in his mind. The Secretary had mentioned that access had been operating so far and that there had been no problem. However, there were many things in the past which no longer existed. At one time, the Germans could not even cross the street without first obtaining permission from either American or Soviet soldiers. Those things were due to Germany's unconditional surrender. Yet the situation had changed, both in East and West Germany; therefore, we must proceed on the basis of the existing situation, although some may not like it, a situation which was highlighted primarily by the existence of two German states.

The Secretary interjected that there was also Berlin.

Mr. Gromyko continued that the Soviet Union did not wish to pocket anything as a result of a settlement. He observed that he liked the Secretary's statement of yesterday that the US and USSR had been allies against Germany and that Germany should not make them enemies. He concluded by saying that both sides had fought against Germany and must draw certain conclusions from that fact.

DECLASSIFIED